Amateur Radio Newsline(tm) Report 1650 - March 27 2009

Amateur Radio Newsline report number 1650 with a release date of Friday, March 27th, 2009 to follow in 5-4-3-2-1.

The following is a QST. The FCC rules that a repeater is a repeater even if there is a built-in audio delay. How will this effect the growth of digital audio repeaters nationwide?

Also, a follow-up on the story about those Indianapolis police officers found using ham radio gear in their cars. You may not believe the outcome.

And the recession hits ham radio as one of the nation's most respected retailers stops selling amateur radio gear and a special April 1st report from roving reporter Pierre Pullinmyleg. All this and more on Amateur Radio Newsline(tm) report number 1650, coming your way right now.

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RADIO RULES: DIGITAL REPEATERS - FCC SAYS A DUCK IS A DUCK

The FCC has clarified its use of the word simultaneous in its rules governing repeater operation, and their decision is not going to make some, planning digital voice repeaters, very happy. That's because they will have to get in-line with those planning analog FM systems and wait for a channel pair. Amateur Radio Newsline's Bill Pasternak, WA6ITF, has the details:

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The FCC decision came in response to a 2007 request for a Declaratory Ruling filed by Gary Mitchell, WB6YRU. Gary is the president of Northern California Packet Association.

Gary's filing was the result of some frequency coordinators and the license holders of some digital voice repeaters claiming that these digital voice repeaters need not be constrained to repeater sub bands. This, because they were technically not repeaters. Those coordinators and licensees asserted that the delay inherent in converting the spoken word to a digital data stream and then back again to audible sound meant that these devices were not simultaneously receiving and retransmitting.

But the FCC says audio processing time is irrelevant. Rather, it concludes that the word "simultaneously," as used in the definition of a "repeater," refers to the receiver and transmitter both being active at the same time. In other words, the fact that it takes a second or two for audio to be digitized and un-digitized is incidental to a digital audio repeater's operation.

Mark Thompson, WB9QZB, in Chicago, follows the digital voice repeater scene world wide. He tells Newsline that the small number of digital voice repeaters in Northern California that actually went the out-of-sub-band-route moved to legitimate repeater sub band channel pairs some time ago. Mark says that he knows of no other digital voice machines currently operating under the guise of being other than repeaters.

We cannot find any either, but if there are, they will need to be re-coordinated inside repeater sub bands or go off the air until such time as channels become available within repeater sub bands.

Because of the time it took the FCC to issue its Declaratory Ruling, it's right now a solution looking for a problem to solve. If nothing else, it does serve as a warning to coordinators and those who might be thinking of putting up a digital voice repeater. One that says to keep them confined within the recognized repeater sub bands and find ways to integrate their operation with the existing analog FM systems because repeater sub bands are the only place where repeaters belong.

One last item. From what we have seen posted on the Internet forums, one thing needs clarification. Neither Gary Mitchell, WB6YRU, nor the Northern California Packet Association coordinate repeaters. The request was filed so as to assure all spectrum users that they will have a place to operate and that digital repeaters will not take over the VHF and UHF bands.

For the Amateur Radio Newsline, I'm Bill Pasternak, in the newsroom in Los Angeles.

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This ruling on the part of the FCC may well go down in the history of ham radio as the "Duck Decision." That's because a number of those who filed in favor of it used the metaphor "if it looks like a duck, waddles like a duck and quacks like a duck, it's a duck." And if a repeater repeats, it's a repeater. (ARNewsline(tm) from FCC release. Additional info from WB9QZB)

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RADIO LAW: INDIANAPOLIS POLICE UNOFFICIAL RADIO FOLLOW-UP

A follow up to our recent news item on the Indianapolis Indiana police found by local hams to be operating unlicensed personal radio gear in their police vehicles. The story is taking an unexpected twist as we hear from Jack Parker, W8ISH:

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More facts are beginning to emerge following a crackdown on Indianapolis Metro Police officers using ham radios for out of band conversations. Over a three-day period last month, police cruisers were searched and officers not holding a valid Amateur Radio license were forced to remove the illegal radios. This follows a complaint to the FCC that law enforcement officers were using modified ham radios for a talk-around tactical (Tac) channel. Some conversations were heard in the VHF police bands, at the bottom of the 2-meter band and on frequencies assigned to the MURS radio service. Recordings of profanity being used brought action by the FCC.

Inside sources say many of the police officers obtained their 2-meter radios through Ebay. One of the most popular radios modified is the Yaesu FT 2800.

Some officers reportedly, paid as much as $350 dollars to a local radio

shop for a used amateur radio that, new, sold for just over a hundred dollars. That is just one example how desperate some Indianapolis police officers are for a reliable Tac channel while fighting crime.

Handcuffed by FCC regulations, many officers are now cracking the cover on Technician Class License study guides to earn their Amateur Radio ticket.

This past weekend three Metro Police officers showed up on the door step of the VE team in Franklin, Indiana. All three passed their test and are anxiously awaiting their new call sign.

Further, this same ARRL examination team is working with one of the newly licensed officers to provide a test session at one of the Indianapolis Metro Police roll call sites so more officers have the opportunity to test and join the ranks of licensed Amateur Radio Operators.

Reporting from Indianapolis, this is Jack Parker W8ISH.

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It will be interesting to see just how many Indianapolis police officers earn their ham radio tickets and how involved they become in that city's ham radio community. More on this story as it becomes available. (ARNewsline(tm), W9ISH)

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THE EXAM SYSTEM: FCC SAYS NO TO QUESTION POOL SIZE INCREASE

The FCC has denied a petition to increase the size of the question pools used to create amateur radio exams. Back in April of 2008, Michael Mancuso, KI4NGN, of Raleigh, North Carolina, had filed a petition with the FCC, seeking to increase the size of the question pools from 10 times the number of questions on an exam to 50 times more questions.

Now, almost a year later the FCC has told Mancuso that it is denying his request. The regulatory agency says that in it's view, Mancuso did not present grounds for the Commission to amend its rules. It also noted that the purpose of the examinations is not to demonstrate an applicant's comprehension of certain material, but rather to determine whether he or she can properly operate an amateur station.

In his rules change request Mancuso had claimed that the current question pool is too easy to memorize and that there has been a significant increase in the number of Amateur Radio operators receiving their licenses over at least the last decade or more who do not appear to possess the knowledge indicated by the class of license that they have received. But the FCC said it does not see it that way. In fact, the regulatory agency says that this claim on Mancuso's part is not supported by any data or facts.

An interesting open forum discussion on this topic started by KI4NGN is currently taking place on QRZ dot com. You will find it at http://forums.qrz.com/showthread.php?t7338 (ARNewsline(tm), QRZ.com)

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RADIO LAW: YOU DO NOT NEED TO SHOW THE PAPER ON THE WALL

The FCC has denied a request from Thomas Baldwin, KA6ZPY, of Anaheim, California, who wanted a rule that would force all radio amateurs to post their original license document at the operating position for the licensee's station. In denying his petition, the FCC noted that this was a requirement until 1994. It was eliminated when the Part 97 rules were amended to authorize operation of an amateur station on the basis of the licensee data appearing in the amateur service licensee database.

The FCC says that the change was made in order to eliminate the delay between the time a license is granted and the time that the licensee may begin to operate. Another reason for the rule change was that it is no longer necessary to require the license document to be immediately available because a licensee's authorization now can be confirmed by the information in the licensing database.   The FCC did note that there is no rule that prevents licensees from posting their license should they so desire. (FCC)

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RADIO POLITICS: COMMISSIONER ADELSTEIN TO GET WHITE HOUSE APPOINTMENT

FCC Commissioner Jonathan Adelstein is expected to be nominated by President Barack Obama to serve as Administrator for the Rural Utilities Service. This is an office of the Rural Development Agency of the United States Department of Agriculture.

The ARRL reports that on Friday, March 20, the President announced his intention to nominate the Democratic FCC Commissioner to that post. It is speculated that Adelstein will not leave the five-member Commission until at least one of the three Commissioner vacancies is filled, since his departure would leave the FCC without a quorum. Adelstein's nomination will need to be confirmed by the US Senate. (ARRL)

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BREAK 1

 From the United States of America, We are the Amateur Radio Newsline, heard on bulletin stations around the world including the W3OC repeater serving North Huntingdon, Pennsylvania.

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NAMES IN THE NEWS: FRANK BAUER, KA3HDO RETIRES FROM ARISS

Frank Bauer KA3HDO has announced his resignation from all of his duties with the Amateur Radio on the International Space Station program. Amateur radio Newsline's Mark Abramowicz, NT3V, has the details:

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Frank Bauer's stunning announcement came March 24 during a special teleconference of those associated with the many programs engaged in

amateur radio activities in space.

"I'm going to need to step down from all of my ARISS duties and that includes, you know, the work I've been doing with the NASA Education Office as the ARISS program leader, and, then also, my support as the ARISS international chair, my responsibilities as the ARISS U.S. delegate and my responsibilities to AMSAT as the AMSAT vice president for human space flight programs," Bauer told the group dialed in from the U.S. and other international spots.

Bauer said family health issues and increasing responsibilities in his job at NASA, where he is the chief engineer for the space agency's Exploration Systems Mission Directorate, played a role in his decision.

This group is working on the next generation of space vehicles which will carry astronauts to the International Space Station, the moon and Mars.

He thanked members of the ARISS international community and AMSAT for their dedication to the programs.

"I want you to all recognize that you all have, amongst yourselves and as a team, grown this team over the past decade and a half, the ARISS team, to a substantially large working group that actually can lead and direct a whole lot of things, " Bauer said.

"So don't lose sight of that. And don't lose sight of the fact that what you're trying to do as a team is to inspire our next generation of young children and students to get involved in space and ham radio and math and science and technology."

Bauer also paid tribute to those who helped make amateur radio in space possible.

"It's crucial that we identify and recognize the space agencies for their help and guidance in making ARISS a success and making it happen," Bauer said.

"They provided the resources, both financial as well as resources like equipment, you know, upmasts and time with the crew, to make ARISS a truly phenomenal educational outreach activity."

And, finally, Bauer paid respects to a man who was so instrumental in getting amateur radio into the space program: the late Roy Neal, K6DUE.

"We wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for Roy, because Roy is the one that got the first space agency, NASA, interested in doing amateur radio on a human space flight vehicle," Bauer said.

"He had the tenacity, the courage and the authority to actually make this happen; and for that we thank him for what he has done to allow us to be where we are today."

For the Amateur Radio Newsline, I'm Mark Abramowicz, NT3V, in Philadelphia

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KA3HDO announced that AMSAT's Will Marchant, KC6ROL, will succeed him as the new AMSAT vice president for human space flight. Marchant also will become the new AMSAT USA delegate for the ARISS international working group. (ARNewsline(tm), NT3V)

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RADIO LAW: NEXT WRC IN GENEVA IN 2011

The next World Radiocommunication Conference is tentatively scheduled for October 24th to November 18th, 2011, in Geneva, Switzerland. The agenda for WRC-11, developed by the delegates at the last conference in 2007 has 25 agenda items addressing potential new or revised spectrum allocations to existing services.

Of most interest to amateurs is agenda item 1.23. It will consider developing an allocation of about 15 kHz in part of the band from 415 to 526.5 kHz on a secondary basis to the amateur service.

These periodic World Radiocommunication Conferences are comprised of the member states of the International Telecommunication Union. Their primary mission is to consider allocations to the various radio services, including the frequencies used by radio amateurs. Attendees also evaluate what new technologies and applications should be addressed by future conferences. (RW)

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RESCUE RADIO: HAMS WIND DOWN FIRE SUPPORT DOWN UNDER

Summer is gone down-under and so have the Australian bush fires. Ham radio communications assistance has also wound down as we hear from Jim Linton, VK3PC.

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It is six weeks since the Black Saturday disaster that involved a third of Victoria claiming 210 lives, destroying more than 2000 homes, wiping out townships and killing farm animals and wildlife in its path.

WICEN Victoria is tallying up its deployment which lasted 28 days and involved 52 radio amateurs including two-each from New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory.

WICEN Secretary Mark Dods, VK3XMU, says the deployment went as well as possibly could be expected.
One of its designated roles is to provide relief operators for other agency communications equipment and that it did in a commendable fashion at a number of Incident Control Centers and a Municipality Emergency Coordination Center.

Just like the debriefing process now underway for all emergency services and response agencies, WICEN, too, will be looking at its performance and to identify room for improvement.

Another aspect of the disaster is how the fire storm affected

communications. The satellite navigation systems which were meant to guide emergency services failed because the smoke was too thick to get the GPS signals from satellites.

Some crews had to open up their printed maps and old-fashioned Melway directories to do the job. And with power failures, the old-fashioned battery-powered radio was the only way for people in its path to keep reliably informed of the bush fires.

For the Amateur Radio Newsline, I'm Jim Linton, VK3PC.

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This year's Australian fire season may now be over, but the hams down under
are well aware that they will likely be called out again next year if the hot dry temperatures return. (WIA News)

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RESCUE RADIO: VK HAMS SUPPORT OIL SPILL CLEAN-UP

Meantime, ham radio operators down-under are supporting clean up efforts in the wake of a massive oil spill. This, after some 230 tons of crude escaped from a tanker off the Queensland coast and become an environmental hazard to some 60 kilometers of Australia's coastline.

About 350 people have joined the clean-up as well as caring for wildlife that may be affected. Among the resources being utilized is the Sunshine Coast Amateur Radio Club's emergency communications van that has been based at Kawana Surf Club on the Sunshine Coast.

The van was donated by the Maroochy Shire Council. Volunteers at the club converted it into a mobile emergency communications unit. Using it, radio amateurs have been deployed to the spill site operating under the auspices of Emergency Management Queensland.

In recent years, Queensland radio amateurs have volunteered to become members of the State Emergency Service, in a dedicated communications unit. The group has built a communications network which is interoperable with Emergency Management Queensland, the Queensland Police Service and the Australian Red Cross RECOM systems. (Amateur Radio Victoria)

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RADIO LAW: IM NOT DEAD YET I'M JUST RESTING

From the "whoops they made a mistake" file comes word that the FCC wants to do some callsign swapping. This, after it learned that a ham the agency thought was dead, was, to use a Monty Python metaphor, just resting. The story goes this way.

On October 6, 2006, the FCC granted the call sign K4ZL as a vanity callsign to the Amateur Radio Station of Peter Birk. Based on information subsequently received by the Commission, it appears that the call sign K4ZL was made available under the vanity call sign system as a result of a

defective cancellation of the license originally held by Elmer B. Jackson, Jr..

Jackson had received the K4ZL call prior to 1978 and it was due to expire on June 11, 2008. On October 3, 2006, the Commission received information indicating that Jackson had become a Silent Key on February 14, 2004. Based on this information, the license was canceled as of February 14, 2004. Birk then filed the above-captioned application, requesting that his license for Amateur Radio Station WB2DCG be modified to show the call sign K4ZL. This application was granted on October 21, 2006.

In June 2008, the FCC got a surprise. That's when Jackson contacted the Commission to report that he was not deceased and that he wished to renew his license and K4ZL callsign. Further review determined that the information submitted to the Commission in 2006 pertained to a different person with the same name.

Anyhow, to correct this error, the FCC is proposing to modify Birk's amateur radio license to show the call sign WB2DCG. That was the call sign assigned to Birk's amateur station prior to the grant of the K4ZL vanity call application. It also wants to modify Jackson's license from his present AJ4JT call back to K4ZL. It will do that shortly unless Birk decides to file an appeal. (FCC)

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BREAK 2

This is ham radio news for today's radio amateur. From the United States of America, we are the Amateur Radio Newsline, with links to the world from our only official website at www.arnewsline.org, and being relayed by the volunteer services of the following radio amateur:

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RADIO BUSINESS: BURGHARDT NO LONGER SELLING HAM RADIO GEAR

Call it a sign of the tough economic times we live in. This, with word that South Dakota-based Burghardt Amateur Center will no longer be selling ham radio gear.

As reported by the ARRL, on March 16, Jim Smith, W0MJY, the current owner of Burghardt, announced that his enterprise will no longer sell amateur radio transceivers and accessories. The company, now called Burghardt Radio Repair, has canceled all backorders and will concentrate on providing repair to ham radio gear.

Jim Smith's son Mike, KC0FTM, told the ARRL that even though the company has had to lay off a number of employees in the past couple of months, it will continue to operate and will concentrate on service. This, as it has done since 1973.

Burghardt Amateur Center was founded in by the late Stan Burghardt, W0IT, as Burghardt Radio Supply. In 1982 he sold the company to Smith, but he remained active in it until January 2002. Stan Burghardt passed away in 2004 at the age of 93. (ARRL, others)

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SPECIAL EVENT: N8O FROM A CABOOSE IN OHIO

A special 6 meter event on rails. This, as Andy Sargent, N8OFS, announces that he will be active June 13th to the 15th as N8O 'portable caboose' from Jefferson, Ohio. His operation is to celebrate the 25th anniversary for the Ashtabula Carson & Jefferson Railway. Listen out for him between 1800 to 0300 UTC on 52.525, 51.500 FM and 50.300 and 50.2 MHz SSB. QSL's go to N8OFS, PO Box 517, Jefferson, Ohio, 44047. For more details about the railroad, visit the Web page at: http://www.acjrscenic.net/history.htm (N8OFS)

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EMERGING TECHNOLOGY: MIT SCIENTISTS INVENT FAST CHARGE LION BATTERY

Materials scientists at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology report that they've invented a new kind of lithium-ion battery. One that can fully charge or discharge in seconds instead of minutes.

Gerbrand Ceder is a professor of materials science and engineering at MIT. Along with his graduate student Byoungwoo Kang, he discovered a way to build lithium-ion batteries with a performance level more like that of ultra-capacitors. These are capacitors that store less energy but can charge and release it very quickly.

If commercialized, this new breed of Lithium Ion battery could allow future hybrid cars to rapidly recharge. It could also lead to improvements in two-way radio as well as to new consumer and industrial products. More is on-line http://www.spectrum.ieee.org/mar09/8149 (CGC from IEEE Spectrum)

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HAM RADIO IN SPACE: SWISS HAM CUBSAT TO LAUNCH

The Swiss Cube Amateur Radio satellite is slated for a ride into space shortly on the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle from India. Once orbited, the bird will operate on a downlink frequency of 437.505 MHz. The launch will also carry several non-amateur satellites into space. If all goes as planned, all of the satellites may be on-orbit by the time you hear this report. (Southgate)

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RADIO IN SPACE: 2001 MARS ODYSSEY SPACECRAFT RESTART POSTPONED

NASA has postponed a move to restart the data processing system on the 2001 Mars Odyssey spacecraft.

According to a news release from the space agency, the delay occurred on Tuesday, March 10th. This, after engineers noticed a spike in temperature on the craft's navigation camera. After consultation, mission managers decided to put off the computer reboot until they can probe the cause of the temperature rise. Odyssey has been put in safe mode in preparation for

the reboot. A new date has not been set.

Scientists at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California, are concerned that the Odyssey computer's memory may have been corrupted. This, from the many years of exposure to radiation in space.

The 2001 Mars Odyssey spacecraft was launched on April 7, 2001, and arrived at Mars on October 24, of that same year. It is a part of NASA's Mars Exploration Program. Odyssey is a long term project of robotic exploration of the red planet. (NASA)

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WORLDBEAT - ATV GOING DIGITAL DOWN UNDER

The Brisbane, Australia amateur television repeater going digital. Three Brisbane-based radio clubs are combining their resources to provide the improved service. These are the South East Queensland ATV Group, Brisbane Digital ATV Group and Queensland Digital Group.

  Using their combined talents, the VK4RMG ATV repeater will undergo a major refurbishment. This includes the instillation of an Australian-standard digital transmitter operating on 446.5 MHz.

Australia is among the latest nations moving its amateur television operations from analog to digital. Germany is believed to have been the first to begin making the digital ATV switch some time ago.
(VK4YAR, WIA News, ARNewsline(tm))

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WORLDBEAT: RADIO AMATEURS OF CANADA POSTPONES ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 2009 Annual General Meeting of Radio Amateurs of Canada has been postponed. This, due to a change in the bookkeeping system at the Radio Amateurs of Canada headquarters office resulting in unforeseen complications. As a result, the meeting scheduled for May 24, 2009, in Quebec, has had to be canceled and a new date will be announced in the future.   (RAC)

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WORLDBEAT - RADIO CLUB CELEBRATES CROATIAN CITY

Croatia's Djurdjevac Radio Club will activate special event station 9A09P between now and December 31st.   This, to celebrate the city of Djurdjevac. Operations will be on all bands and modes with special QSL card will be issued with the city's story on it. All QSOs will be confirmed automatically via the bureau. Under the new administrative division of Croatia, Djurdjevac gained the status of a city in 1997. (OPDX)

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WORLDBEAT - ISRAEL'S HOLYLAND CONTEST 2008 RESULTS AVAILABLE

4Z4KX says that the results for Israel's 2008 Holyland Contest are now available on the IARC Web. The URL is www.iarc.org. 4Z4KX also notes that the 2009 Holyland Contest will take place on Saturday, April 18th, starting at 0000 hours, UTC. (IARC)

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DX

In DX, word that NL8F will be active as E51COF for 14 days from Rarotonga Island through April 4th. Activity will be on 80 through 10 meters and possibly 17 meters on SSB only. QSL manager for this operation is K8NA.

SV1QN, SV1AIN, SV1GYG and SW1GYN will be active through month's end using their personal calls from the Greek resort island of Zakynthos. They are purportedly operating on 160 through 6 meters using all modes. QSL via each operator's home call.

Lastly, sponsors are being sought for the next DXpedition to Mogador island. Mogador was last activated in 2002 and another DXpedition is planned for late April 2009. Check out their website at www.mogador2009.altervista.org for more details.

(Above from various DX news sources)

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THAT FINAL ITEMS: MISSING SUNSPOTS MAY HAVE BEEN EMBEZZLED

And finally this week, word that the mystery of the missing sunspots and lack of propagation may have been traced, incredibly, to some of the same roots as the current global economic crisis. Newsline Roaming Investigative Reporter Pierre Pullinmyleg has roamed into his shortwave communications news transmission center with the details he has uncovered:

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It now appears zat convicted swindler Bernard Madoff not only made off with zee 65 billion dollars of investors' money, but with zee cycle 24 sunspots as well. A little-known corner of zee financial marketplace actually more of a back alley is zee sunspot futures market, where traders buy and sell based on predicted sunspot values for a given date.

Our investigation has revealed that when the stock market was trading at ionospheric levels, Madoff accepted millions of dollars zat he promised to invest in future sunspots, but instead simply deposited in an offshore account in zee Serrano Bank on the fabled Ponzi Island IOTA NA-0401 for those who wonder. When zee time came to actually purchase the sunspots for cycle 24, the accounts set up for that purpose were empty. As a result, za sun has declared bankruptcy and zee universe has begun foreclosure proceedings.

Attorneys for zee sun are trying to negotiate a bailout package but are not optimistic that they can meet zee April 1st deadline.

From zee somewhat darkened beaches of Ponzi Island, zis is Pierre

Pullinmyleg reporting for Newsline.

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Pierre says that he will be back in about 12 months to bring you up to date on further developments in the solar foreclosure proceedings. And just in case he did not mention it earlier, Pierre says to have a very happy April 1st. (Roving reporter Pierre Pullinmyleg via shortwave)

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NEWSCAST CLOSE

With thanks to Alan Labs, AMSAT, the ARRL, the CGC Communicator, CQ Magazine, the FCC, the Ohio Penn DX Bulletin, Radio Netherlands, Rain, the RSGB, the Southgate News and Australia's WIA News, that's all from the Amateur Radio Newsline(tm). Our e-mail address is newsline <at> arnewsline <dot> org. More information is available at Amateur Radio Newsline's(tm) only official website located at www.arnewsline.org. You can also write to us or support us at Amateur Radio Newsline(tm), P.O. Box 660937, Arcadia, California 91066.

A reminder that the nominating period for the 2009 Amateur Radio Newsline Young Ham of the Year Award is now open. Complete details are on our website at www.arnewsline.org. Just scroll down to the words "2009 YHOTY Nominations Now Open" and click for more information and an official nominating form.

Also be sure to mark April 18th as this year's World Amateur Radio Day. World Amateur Radio Day will focus on the hobby as it empowers people and supports communities by providing emergency communication as well as public service oriented interaction for community and other special events.

For now, with Bill Pasternak, WA6ITF, at the editor's desk, I'm Don Carlson, KQ6FM in Reno, Nevada, saying 73 and we thank you for listening.

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